Virtual Investigation
Best Practices

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Virtual School

- March 2020 – most schools closed and transitioned to virtual learning
- Pace of sex-based discrimination lawsuits and OCR inquiries continued unabated
- No reduction in pace of investigations
- Increase in virtual bullying, “Zoom bombing,” other behaviors
- Requests for advice/assistance with investigations
Virtual Investigations

Opportunities

- Time zones are not an obstacle
- Physical meeting locations are much less of a limiter
- Easier to exchange information/evidence
- Less emphasis on suitable meeting space
- Simplicity of recording
Virtual Investigations

Challenges

- Tech savvy and accessibility – not only for you but for interviewees, advisors, guardians, etc.
- Present distinct challenges for accomplishing primary investigation objectives
  - Setting the environment
  - Developing rapport
  - Safeguarding privacy
  - Managing advisors
  - Identifying/vetting/collecting evidence
Tech Savvy

Know your technology

- Setting up a meeting
  - Unique meeting IDs
- What do attendees see when they join?
- How do you see all attendees?
- Recording feature
- Screen sharing
- Separate rooms for interviewees/advisors
- Troubleshooting/assistance
Setting the Environment

- Your interview space
  - Adequate lighting
  - Appropriate background
  - Visible privacy
- Interview dress
  - Similar considerations to in-person
- Expectations for interviewee/advisors
  - Communicate ahead of time
Developing Rapport

- Rapport depends on creating a level of comfort
  - Active listening (for example, eye contact)
- Anticipate obstacles ahead of time
  - Accessibility services
  - Contingency for dropped signal
  - Awkwardness of virtual setting
  - Guarantee of privacy
  - Availability of breaks, breakout rooms
- Be prepared and organized
Developing Rapport

- Trauma-infused techniques
  - More difficult to read expressions, nonverbals
  - When in doubt, stop and ask
- Demeanor observations
  - Less ability to read body language
  - More plausible explanations for distractedness
- Full-face vs. large room
- Multiple participants
Safeguarding Privacy

Your interview space

- Inside, not outside
- In an enclosed space
- Explain potential noises or interruptions
- Headphones when necessary
- Video on – don’t mute without explanation
- Notifications, phone calls, other computer sounds
- Similar considerations for interviewee, advisor, other attendees
Managing Advisors

- Ensure they have a private way to communicate with advisee
  - Warn about embedded chat – private vs. broadcast
- Explain breakout rooms or breaks upon request
- Similar limitations to in-person interviews
- Don’t unilaterally use “mute” or “kick” options
- May ask advisors, advocates, others to mute at beginning
- Video on, similar expectations for privacy
- Interviewee, advisor, others in the same room?
Evidence Collection

- Visually vet information by holding up to the camera
- Ability to email information instantaneously?
- Screen-sharing
- Secure sharing via network drive
Questions?
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